

No. III.

THE

CONSPIRACY

OF THE

ARISTOCRATS

LAID OPEN.

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*Macbeth.*] —Will it not be received  
 When we have mark'd with Blood the sleepy Two  
 Of his own Chamber, and used their very Daggers,  
 That they have done't?—

*Lady Macbeth.*] —Who dares receive it other,  
 As we shall make our Griefs and Clamours roar?

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L O N D O N:

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1791.

THE

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

UNITED STATES

1787

AND

THE

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

OF THE

UNITED STATES

OF AMERICA

1776

AND

1787

1787

THE

1787

1787

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T H E

CONSPIRACY, &c.

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“ MR. Burke has spoken a great deal  
“ about *Plots*, but he has never once spoken  
“ of this plot against the National Assembly  
“ and the liberties of the nation ; and that  
“ he might not, has passed over all the cir-  
“ cumstances that might throw it in his  
“ way. The exiles who have fled from  
“ France, whose case he so much interests  
“ himself in, and from whom he had his les-  
“ son, fled in consequence of the miscarriage  
“ of this plot. *No plot* was formed against  
“ *them* : they were plotting *against others* ;  
“ and those who fell, met not unjustly the  
“ punishment they were preparing to exe-  
“ cute.

“ It is to be observed throughout Mr.  
“ Burke’s book that he never speaks of plots

“ *against* the Revolution, and it is from  
 “ those plots that *all the mischiefs* have arisen.”

*Rights of Man, by Thomas Paine, &c.*

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OF all the engines practised to deceive the people in order to bring about a Revolution, there are none *so useful* for every reason, and consequently *so allowable*, as the *pious frauds* with which the aggressors turn the tables upon those they attack, by imputing to them the blame of their own actions. The fable of the wolf and the lamb, he wants a pretence to devour, makes that impression in our nursery, that it is no wonder if its principle is exemplified in our conduct. In this instance, however, (though to be sure it was well enough to serve the purpose of the moment, whilst the minds were too much heated for reflection) I am rather surprised that so *judicious* a writer as Mr. Paine should venture to try it in cool blood upon his readers; as he might be well aware that not succeeding with them (as, indeed, how should it succeed?) it was the nature of the engine improperly used, to recoil with some force upon the unskilful. By imputing “ *all the mis-*  
 “ *chiefs*



“ *chiefs that have arisen* ” to these aristocratical conspiracies, may you not, perhaps, be embarrassed to account for them with honour to your party, if the public at this time of day should decide, that these formidable plots never have had an existence but in the credulity of the deluded multitude? In reading a very learned and ingenious tract that has lately appeared upon a *constitutional* subject, I was not a little struck with a citation from Tully, which, from its clearness, conciseness, and the conviction it impresses upon the mind, may, I conceive, be allowed some merit, considering the ignorance of the man, and of the age he wrote in, unenlightened by the stile, and by the discovery of modern philosophy.

“ Aliud est *maledicere*, aliud accusare. Accusatio crimen desiderat, rem ut definiat, hominem ut notet, argumento probet, teste confirmet. Maledictio nihil habet propositi præter contumeliam; quæ si petulantius jactatur, *convicium*, si facetius urbanitas dicitur.”

“ To revile and to *accuse* are widely different. Accusation implies a *crime*, that the

“ crime should be *defined*, that the *person*  
 “ should be clearly marked, that the charge  
 “ should be supported by *argument*, and  
 “ proved by *evidence*. Reviling is satisfied  
 “ if it does but asperse ; when seasoned by  
 “ wit, it assumes a softer appellation : but  
 “ when vulgarly, clumsily, coarsely urged,  
 “ *downright abuse* is the only term that  
 “ suits it.”

Now first with regard to the *Crime*, and  
 then with regard to the *Proof*.

Two parties may have had a plot at the  
 same time, and yet one have been perfectly  
 innocent, and the other criminal to the last  
 degree. This same Tully made it his boast,  
 that when Cataline was plotting the destruc-  
 tion of Rome, in a conspiracy formed of every  
 thing the most infamous in the city, mixed,  
 indeed, with some well meaning dupes, from  
 whom he concealed the extent of his designs ;  
 when these conspirators, pressed by the cre-  
 ditors they had ruined to supply the most  
 dissolute profligacy, were attempting a *Revo-*  
*lution*, which was to raise them to riches and  
 power upon the bleeding carcases of their  
 proscribed victims, and the subversion of the  
 Senate,

Senate, that *Aristocracy*, the eternal barrier against patriot disorder, and the glorious anarchy of equality, Tully, I say, was not ashamed to avow, that as guardian of the common weal, in support of established order, and of the laws of the Republic which gave security to the life and property of every peaceable citizen, *he* had counterplotted their designs: nay, that he had *plotted* so judiciously, and at the same time so vigorously, as to drive the conspirators out of the walls *before* the train they had been preparing had taken effect, which would have involved the magistrates, the senators, the temples of the gods, in one common ruin.

I am aware that such a conduct (which even at the time did not escape the murmurs of some disappointed *political Reformers*) can be justified only by the prevailing *prejudices*, which then subsisted in full force, and have since continued, till the present *blessed æra* of our philosophy has now done them away for ever. Cicero had never the advantage to read Mr. Paine's *definition* of a constitution.

Mr. Paine tells us, " It was discovered  
" about a week before the rising of the Pari-

“ fians and their taking the Bastille, that a  
 “ plot was forming, at the head of which  
 “ was the Count d’Artois, for demolishing  
 “ the National Affembly, feizing its mem-  
 “ bers, and thereby crushing, by a coup de  
 “ main, all hopes and prospects of forming  
 “ a free Government.” In this plot we must  
 own there is *crime* enough alledged of all  
 conscience. To demolish the whole National  
 Affembly by a coup de main, and seize all  
 the members, is a strong measure ; but what  
 does the term of demolishing mean, if the  
 intention was to seize only, and not to mas-  
 sacre the members ? A simple declaration of  
 the King, as the law then stood, would,  
 without troops, have demolished that Affem-  
 bly as a legal body most effectually by dis-  
 solving them. The imprisonment, indeed,  
 of twelve hundred members would have been  
 somewhat more difficult ; but, supposing that  
 there were cages sufficient to put them all  
 into, or that a selection only was intended of  
 such a number, as the Bastille, the isles St.  
 Marguerite, the Pierre-en-cise, and other state  
 prisons would contain, I do not clearly see  
 how all hopes and prospects of forming a  
 free Government would have been thereby  
 crushed—I see, on the contrary, that a gene-  
 ral



ral rising of the whole kingdom must have been the inevitable consequence of so violent an insult upon all good faith in the persons of the representatives of the nation. Foolish, desperate, and improbable as must appear to every man so strange an idea, under all its circumstances, we have a right to expect the fullest evidence of the fact, before we can admit such a ground in justification of an open rebellion against all subsisting law and government. That the same King, who had not a fortnight before presented himself in all his state to the Assembly, to make a solemn proffer to them of establishing the freedom of their Government for ever on the most solid basis; who had proposed to them of his own royal grace, *security to their persons and properties*, under the sanction of the laws of their country—the right of imposing *their own taxes* and keeping *their own purses*, and consequently of presenting their grievances and enforcing a redress of them by their periodical meetings; in a word, who had called upon them to adopt (though under a legislature differently composed from our's) a system as free as that of England; that the same King, in the face of all Europe, should so soon have risked his crown, in order to crush

crush all " hopes and prospects" of the very object he had just been tendering, and which the Assembly had only to have ratified, to have rendered those blessings irrevocable to them and their posterity; surely it must require some proof beyond mere assertion to give credit to *such an improbability*. Of any such intention, however, (probable or not) what are the proofs?—It is now a year and nine months that the National Assembly have been in absolute and uncontrouled possession of the power of the country—all means of discovery have been in their hands; they have had a *Committee de Recherches* to investigate; they have had a tribunal at the Chatelet to receive and try accusations; nay, they have actually impeached a general officer, Monsr. de Berzenval, who, having had the command of the Swiss troops, encamped at Paris during the Revolution, must have been one of the active conspirators in the plot, whatever it was, if any plot existed.—Have they been able to produce, in all this time, one single evidence of any intention of the Government, that they themselves could construe into a colour of crime, or which could, in one instance, justify the strange charges that were invented to serve the purpose

pose of the hour, and that having served that purpose, ought to have been consigned by their authors to perpetual oblivion ? Mons. de Berzenval, who underwent so long and so rigorous a confinement, something so like a Bastille imprisonment, and something so like a trial by the Inquisition, were they not obliged at last to acquit him of guilt, having found it impossible to fix a suspicion upon his conduct ? If then accusation is founded neither upon proof, nor even upon probability, have we not reason to presume it false in toto ? Are we not obliged to treat it as a falsehood, and an impudent one, till it can be proved to be true ? In short, is it not to be ranked with the stories that were swallowed every hour in the Palais Royal, that the Queen and the Count d'Artois had contrived the scaffolding so as to give way when the Assembly met at Versailles, to bury the deputies in ruins like the temple of the Philistines ; that they had filled the quarries under the city with powder to blow Paris into the air ; that a secret passage of many miles under ground was to convey troops into the Bastille to cut the throats of the inhabitants in the night ; that the Count d'Artois had  
fired



fired a pistol at M. Neckar in the gallery of Versailles, four and twenty hours after his departure, when he was got very near the frontiers of the kingdom ? &c. &c. &c.\*

But still, says Mr. Paine and his friends, there must have been a plot though it has never been discovered, and there are two proofs of it : the first in the flight of the princes of the blood, and what he calls the *exiles*, though to this hour we have heard of no sentence of banishment pronounced, or even legal accusation against them. The other proof is, that troops, and particularly foreign regiments, were drawn round the capital and the Royal residence, where the Assembly held its deliberations. These two facts are admitted, but neither are they cri-

\* “ But as to a blockade, a siege, or the project of cannonading the capital ; as to the list of deputies, who, they said, were going to be carried off, never did I suffer any of these ideas to be entertained by me ; never were they offered to me by others, that I did not reject them with horror ; and, perhaps, nobody had less faith in them, than those who took so much pains to spread them abroad.”—*Memoires de M. Lally Tollendal*, page 64.



minal in themselves, nor do they necessarily imply a criminal intention. . That the law had invested the Monarch with the command of his troops, will no more be denied than that there existed no law to prevent the subjects from leaving the country, when they thought it no longer safe for them to remain in it. But even as to their motives in the exercise of an acknowledged right, what is it that naturally suggests itself to our minds? Why, with regard to the fugitives, that all protection of the law being withdrawn, and the popular rage being directed against them, it would have been madness to have exposed their lives to the fate of Foulon, of Berthier, of Launay, and of so many others who were sacrificed to the rage of merciless tygers unheard, unaccused, unprotected, and unpitied. With regard to the troops, is the only possible object of an army, that of oppression and tyranny? Have the peaceable subjects of a country no right to the *protection* of that force which is paid by their contribution for their defence against *domestic* as well as *foreign* enemies? Is not that protection amongst the first duties of a sovereign, who is responsible to his people for their safety? Was the state  
of

of Paris at that time so free from alarm as to demand no extraordinary exertion of the executive power, to prevent the spirit of disorder that was increasing every hour, from breaking out into that combustion, which has since put the lives and properties of the citizens to the hazard of every new incident? What was the answer the King made to the Assembly, when they expressed their jealousy of this force drawn round them?—he declares upon his Royal word, that they were intended for their defence and protection, and for maintaining the public tranquillity, not for the annoyance of them, or of any peaceable subject in his dominions.—Whilst the city of Paris was incited every hour to rebellion, by orators openly hired for that purpose; when every seditious and treasonable paper was circulated in the face of day, to drive the people to distraction; when individuals were hourly pointed out to the popular fury, as devoted victims; when a profusion of money was publicly distributed to debauch the regiments of guards from their obedience; when the military prisons had been forced, and the military prisoners led in triumph, and publicly entertained with seductions

seductions of the most dissolute orgies; when every serious man was expecting from hour to hour a general massacre to break out, or the city to be burnt or pillaged from one end of it to the other; in a word, when every face was either inflamed with passion, or pale with consternation, would it have become the father of his people to have been the only man in his dominions insensible to the awful crisis, and negligent of the public safety?

If, then, no plot whatever has been brought to light in all this time, which can charge the *Aristocrats*, as they are called, with either overt-act or intention to do more than maintain the peace of the country, at a moment when it was menaced with the most horrible disorders; and if even those precautions were, from mistaken delicacy, delayed till they could no longer be effectual, it is in vain to lay such idle clamour as a ground of justification for what was in itself at that time unequivocally criminal, a subversion of all the laws and institutions of the kingdom. Let the world judge whether those who are become the victims of such a Revolution have brought the miseries they suffer “ not unjustly

“ justly upon themselves, by plotting against  
“ others, whilst there was no plot formed  
“ against them.”

How base as well as cruel is it, to add insult to oppression !

F I N I S.